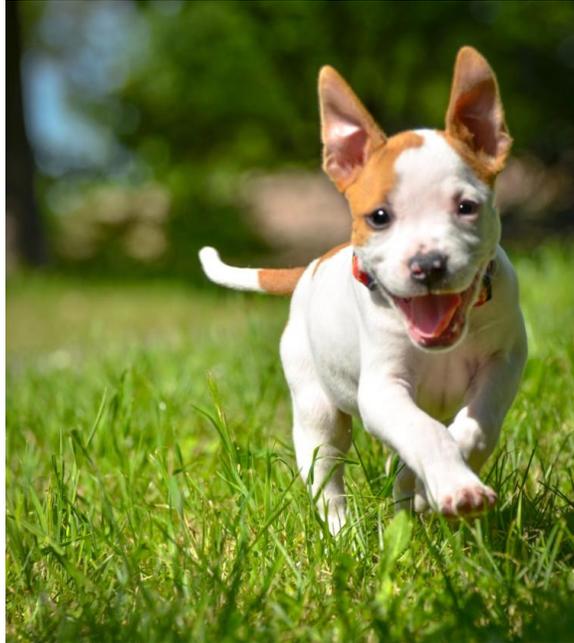


# A Scavenger Hunt for Puppies (and adult dogs too)



Summer is a great time to get a puppy. Schedules are a little more relaxed; there is often more time to spend getting the puppy used to the household environment; and potty training is always easier when the weather is warmer. Of course, socialization is important for puppies and nicer summer weather helps to get everyone out with the new addition. But what should you do with your new puppy?

Try to introduce your pup to things on this [Scavenger Hunt](#) before he is 12 weeks of age. If you really want to excel, do everything on the list multiple times! If you have an older dog, you can still play the scavenger hunt. Just check off how many things your dog has already experienced and then tackle the new items!

But here's the catch. *In order for socialization to be effective and helpful to your dog, it has to be fun!* So follow these ground rules:

1. **Go slowly!** Everything has to be done at your dog's pace. If your dog is nervous, backing away, or hiding, then take things very slowly. Don't force your dog to do anything he finds extremely scary.
2. **Use Distance!** Stay away from things until your dog is comfortable. If your dog is scared of something from 5 feet away, it's likely he will be terrified when he's only 1 foot away. Allow your dog to get comfortable from a safe distance first and then move closer as the dog relaxes.
3. **Feed treats!** Mere exposure to things is not socialization. Good socialization involves making positive associations with something new. I do this by giving the dog treats (high value tasty treats like cheese, liver, or chicken) for approaching something novel. I also play fun games with the dog when he is near something new. Treats and toys tell me when the dog might be getting overwhelmed. If your dog won't eat treats or play when he's doing something new, there is a good chance, he's getting nervous. This is your clue to slow down, back up, and start over.
4. **Have fun!** This is all about having fun for both you and your dog. If you aren't having fun or your dog is worried, then take a break and go tackle another item on the scavenger hunt.